

July  
2003



# State Senator Liz Brater

## The Lansing Report



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### Want to know more?

Mailing funds are limited and I would like to keep in touch with you. Please take a minute to e-mail me your e-mail address so I can send you legislative updates. If you don't have e-mail, please call my toll-free number to receive updates by mail. Thank you!

*Dear Friends,*

*Greetings from Lansing! My first few months as your State Senator have been very exciting. I wanted to take some time to provide you with information about what we've been working on in Lansing and tell you about some of the legislation I've introduced.*

*So far this year we have been very busy. As you are aware, the financial situation in our state and our nation is challenging right now. The decline in the national economy, coupled with a state budget deficit of nearly \$1.7 billion, has put our state in a precarious fiscal position. When we got here in January, we knew we would be faced with difficult decisions when it came to balancing the budget for fiscal year 2004. However, Governor Granholm has laid out a sound and responsible plan to get us back to fiscal stability and continued economic growth. Now my colleagues and I in the Legislature must work to enact legislation that will help our state move forward.*

*As Governor Granholm has said, these challenges will give us the opportunity to achieve greatness for our state. I firmly believe that she is right. We have many opportunities to make our state great. I have been working to address some of the challenges we face in Michigan through legislation that will improve our environment, protect our civil rights, increase participation in the electoral process, and help provide access to affordable prescription medications.*

*Another important part of our commitment to make Michigan great is to address urban sprawl. I was appointed earlier this year by Governor Granholm to serve on the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council. The Governor has asked this 26-member council to study and identify trends, causes, and consequences of urban sprawl. We have held a number of public hearings already and will continue to do so until we provide our recommendations to the Governor in August. I'm very hopeful that we will be able to promote sound measures to curb sprawl, while still protecting farmland and reinvesting in our urban areas.*

*I will be out and about in the district this summer and am looking forward to meeting and talking with citizens and community leaders. I welcome your input on the issues we are tackling in Lansing this year, as well as anything else you would like to discuss. I look forward to hearing from you.*

Liz Brater  
State Senator • 18th District

# Legislative Update

Senator Liz Brater has been the primary sponsor or a co-sponsor on over 70 pieces of legislation in the current legislative session. Below are highlights of some of the bills Liz has introduced.

## Midwest Pharmaceutical Compact

In February, Governor Granholm, along with Vermont Governor Jim Douglas, announced the implementation of the nation’s first multi-state pharmaceutical purchasing arrangement under their respective Medicaid programs. Michigan will be able to leverage its purchasing power with Vermont to reduce the cost of prescription drugs and preserve essential

pharmaceutical coverage for our state’s most vulnerable citizens.

Complementing the Governor’s initiative is Senator Brater’s legislation creating the Midwest Pharmaceutical Compact. The Compact would provide an enlarged pool for the purchase of pharmaceutical products and services for all Medicaid recipients and publicly insured or uninsured health care

recipients living in states participating in the compact.

There are far too many people who must decide every month whether they will buy their groceries or their medications. Senator Brater’s bill, along with the Governor’s multi-state compact, addresses the needs of Michigan’s seniors and uninsured individuals.

## Brater Works to Protect Michigan’s Precious Natural Resources

Senator Brater has introduced a number of bills intended to protect Michigan’s vital natural resources. Her legislation includes bills to monitor what goes into our landfills, restrict who can dump trash in our state, and limit capacity of our landfills so we do not become the Great Waste State.

Here are summaries of some of the bills:

**Senate Bill 98:** Michigan’s current regulatory system places restrictions on the dumping of solid waste such as tires, car batteries, yard clippings, and used motor oil. Senate Bill 98 would allow state officials to reject out-of-state trash shipments containing these products unless the communities sending the waste have a regulatory system in place that is at least as strict as

Michigan’s. This bill would reduce the flow of waste that is being shipped into Michigan from other jurisdictions.

**Senate Bill 274:** This bill would prohibit the disposal of batteries and fluorescent light bulbs in the state’s landfills. Eliminating these items will not only reduce what we landfill but should also have a positive impact on our water and air quality.

**Senate Bill 351:** In an effort to reduce phosphorous pollution, Senator Brater introduced this legislation which would place strict limitations on the amount of phosphorous in dishwashing liquids.

**Senate Bill 557:** Senator Brater recently introduced legislation that would limit current landfill capacity and prohibit new capacity. Senate Bill 557 will limit Michigan’s landfill capacity to the volume required to handle in-state waste by prohibiting new landfill capacity in a given region of the state unless the disposal capacity is less than ten years for Michigan’s waste. Limiting capacity will effectively reduce the number of acres in the state that can be dedicated to land filling.



## What You Can Do to Help

The Middle Huron River is over-supplied with phosphorous, which causes greater algae growth. The excessive amounts of algae starve the aquatic life of vital oxygen needed for their survival. Since

most Washtenaw County soil is already rich in phosphorous, please look for a formula low in phosphorous when choosing your lawn fertilizer this summer. Another thing you can do to help reduce phosphorous pollution is to

use dishwasher detergent that is low in phosphorous. Many of our local food co-ops and natural food stores carry detergent for dishwashers that have much lower phosphorous content than most name brand products.

# Equal Pay for Equal Work



There is currently no law in Michigan preventing employers from paying different wages to different people doing the same work. Senator Brater is sponsoring legislation to close this gap in our state’s Civil Rights protections. Senate Bill 124 will prevent employers from not paying equitable wages because of an individual’s religion, race,

color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, or marital status. We must do all we can to eliminate any and all discriminatory practices in our state. This bill is just one more step toward that end.

## Vote By Mail

Senate Bill 149 would allow Michigan voters to vote by mail in local and statewide elections. Vote by mail is a method of distributing ballots for an election. Instead of voters going to the polls on Election Day, a ballot is automatically

mailed to each registered voter. The voter completes the ballot and returns it to the designated elections office to be counted. Voting by mail has increased voter participation in states that have already implemented this program. A more informed voting public is

also an advantage of mail-in balloting. Voters have more time to review the ballot, providing the opportunity to study the issues, clarify any points of confusion, and get questions answered.

## Especially for Seniors

### EPIC Program Strengthened Under Granholm’s Budget Proposal

Governor Granholm is calling for an expansion of the Elder Prescription Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program. With the Pharmacy Plus Waiver currently awaiting approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Michigan will be able to expand its EPIC program to an additional 27,000 needy seniors and disabled individuals. The waiver will increase spending in the program from \$30 million to \$68 million. Currently, the EPIC program

serves fewer than 15,000 people. With the waiver, EPIC will be available to more than 42,000. Funding for this program is included in the budget for the Department of Community Health, which is currently being discussed in Senate and House committees.



## MIChoice to Be Expanded

Governor Granholm recently announced that the MIChoice program would be re-opened for enrollment now that Michigan has received approval to do so from the federal government. The MIChoice program, also known as the Home and Community Based Services

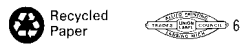
Waiver, allows seniors and persons with disabilities to remain in their own homes and receive care. Enrollment in the program has been closed since early 2002 and currently serves approximately 6,500 people statewide. Governor Granholm’s 2004 budget proposal

calls for continued funding of \$100 million for the MIChoice program. This program is also funded in the budget for the Department of Community Health.



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# Senator Brater Discusses Sprawl with Washtenaw County Residents

Over 80 people came out to Washtenaw Community College in March to share their ideas and concerns about land use in Michigan with Senator Brater and State Representative Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor). The opinions and ideas presented were very valuable in the ongoing discussion of land use and urban sprawl. The suggestions that were articulated

at this meeting were thoughtful, impassioned, and creative. The meeting was attended by numerous local officials, including representatives from county, city, and township boards and commissions. There were also builders, developers, farmers, and concerned local citizens. Over 25 attendees addressed the legislators, commenting on issues



from farmland protection and watershed planning to new urbanism and support for affordable housing.

The Senator and her fellow Council members are committed to finding solutions



and giving the Governor a workable plan for land use in Michigan.

# Registration for "Do Not Call" List Begins This Summer

Consumers will soon be able to put their phone numbers on a national do not call registry to prevent unwanted telemarketing calls. This legislation, recently passed in the U.S. Congress, will make it illegal for most telemarketers to call a number listed on the registry. When

the registration begins in July 2003, consumers can register for free either online at [www.ftc.gov/donotcall](http://www.ftc.gov/donotcall) or by calling the toll-free hotline at (888) 382-1222. Since it is anticipated that the call volume for initial registration will be high, signup by phone will be

phased in over an eight-week period. Online registration will be open to everyone in the U.S. in July. Starting in October, it will be illegal for most telemarketers to call a number listed on the registry.